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ABSTRACT

This handbook describes skills and competencies that are consistent with the most generally accepted middle school philosophies. These include the philosophy that middle schools should be student-centered, should ease the transition to high school, emphasize an integrated curriculum, and implement instruction that emphasizes active learning. Chapter 1 addresses the organization and structure of the middle school, which has evolved in recent years. Chapter 2 examines management and leadershp as applied to middle-school administration. Discussed are the definitions of the two competencies and the implications for the school principal. The third chapter provides historical and philosophical bases for curricula in the middle school and describes what is essential to a true middle-level school in terms of curriculum and instruction. The administrator-teacher relationship is discussed in the fourth chapter, with suggestions for the development of teams, teacher involvement, and supervision as it relates to the middle school. Chapter 5 addresses the importance of school-community relations and its impact on the operation of the middle school. Contains a 22-item bibliography. (LMI)

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The Practicing Administrator's Leadership Series

Jerry J. Herman and Janice L. Herman, Editors

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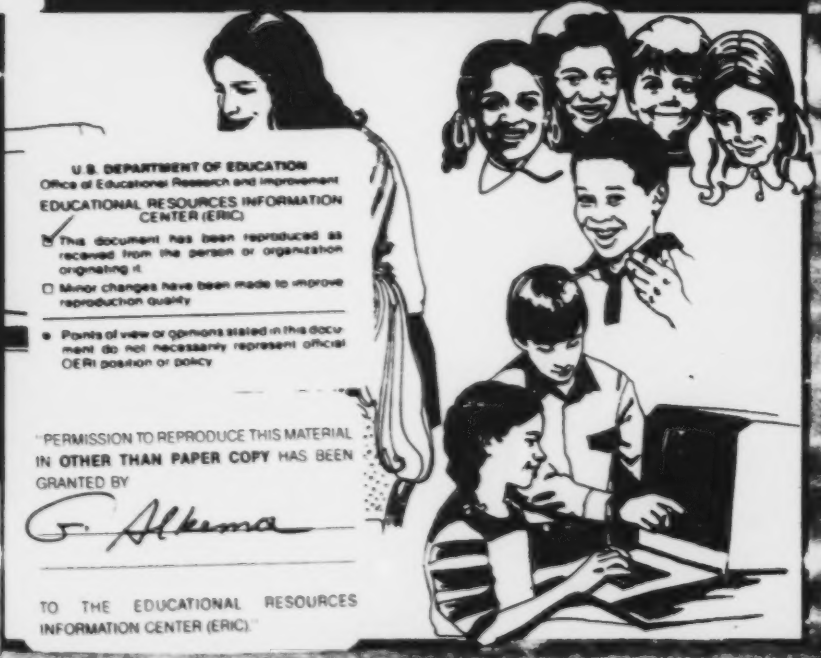
The Middle School Principal



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The Middle School Principal

Richard F. Farmer
M. Wayne Gould, Robert L. Herring
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Foreword

Five educators have collaborated to author a handbook that is designed to assist not only existing middle school principals, but also those teachers and graduate students who aspire to careers as middle school principals. Each of the authors brings a great deal of teaching and administrative experience to the task, and this is clearly evident in the practicality and helpfulness woven into each of the book's chapters.

Together, the authors weave a story of the total environment within which a middle school exists while always emphasizing the leadership role of the middle school principal. They begin their text by providing a brief overview of the characteristics of a middle school and of the evolutionary stages that formed the current middle school's structures and processes.

Next, they add a leadership and management layer of information, followed by the philosophical base upon which the middle school curriculum is built. They end the volume by discussing the internal environment as it relates to the interface between the teachers and the principal, and by elaborating upon the external environment as it relates to the community's interface with the employees and students of the middle school.

Overall, the authors present a research and historical knowledge base as well as operational suggestions. Finally, the authors provide an annotated bibliography for those readers who wish to delve more deeply and learn more about middle schools.

JERRY J. HERMAN
JANICE L. HERMAN
Series Co-Editors

Preface

The middle school concept is not well understood by many educators whose professional practice is with children in the middle years. We believe that there is much to recommend the organizing of middle schools provided that administrators and teachers ensure that the program and operation of the schools are meeting the unique needs of young adolescents. This book seeks to provide suggestions for principals for developing programs and activities responsive to the needs of young adolescents in middle schools.

In trying to address the needs of both preservice and inservice middle school administrators specifically, we found a distressing dearth of practical books. This book addresses the drought. Certainly there is no claim to having succeeded completely in meeting this growing need; rather, it is intended that the book provide a positive and practical contribution to the field of middle school administration.

Clearly, much that is written for elementary and secondary administrators can be useful to the middle school administrator. However, it is our purpose to present knowledge and to describe skills and competencies that relate directly to middle school administrators and that are consistent with the most generally accepted middle

school philosophies. This would include the philosophy that middle schools should be student centered, ease the transition to high school, emphasize an integrated curriculum, and implement instruction that emphasizes active learning and is activity oriented, as well as have an administration that is aware of the physical and emotional traits of middle-school-aged students.

We propose this book for use by middle school administrators and teachers as well as university graduate students preparing for administrative or supervisory positions in middle schools. We have been principals of elementary, secondary, and junior high schools or have specialized in study of middle school students and middle school curricula. Readers will find a wealth of information from recent literature as well as suggestions for applying this information to the practice of middle school administration.

Chapter 1 addresses the organization and structure of the middle school, which has evolved in recent years. Chapter 2 addresses management and leadership as applied to middle school administration. The reader will be interested to note the definitions of "leadership" and "management" and the implications for the school principal. Chapter 3 provides historical and philosophical bases for curricula in the middle school and describes what is essential to a true middle-level school in terms of curriculum and instruction.

Chapter 4 focuses on the relationship of the principal to the professional staff with suggestions for team building, teacher involvement, and supervision as it relates to the middle school. Chapter 5 addresses the importance of school community relations and its impact on the operation of the middle school. Taken together, these chapters provide encouragement and ideas to help the administrator in fulfilling the mission of a true middle school organization.

RICHARD F. FARMER
M. WAYNE GOULD
ROBERT L. HERRING
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About the Authors

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University of Memphis (formerly Memphis State University). His major research interests are in the area of middle school administration. His most current publication, titled "School Climate: A Comparison of Middle Schools and Junior High Schools," was published in the Fall/Winter 1994 issue of the *Record*.

Robert L. Herring, Ph.D., is Director of Field Experiences and an Assistant Professor of Educational Administration at Southeast Missouri State University. He was a teacher in public elementary and secondary schools for 18 years, as well as a 7-12 building principal, an assistant superintendent, and a superintendent of schools. For 5 years, he was a state supervisor of instruction for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. He has conducted numerous workshops on administration of curriculum, teacher evaluation, mentoring, and classroom management in Missouri public schools. His publications include: "The Fate of School Tax Issues in Missouri, 1983-1993," in the Missouri school board journal *Show Me Education*; "More Reflections of Beginning Teachers," in the Missouri State Teachers Association publication *Survival Guide for Beginning Teachers*; and articles in the *Muate Sun*, a publication of the Missouri Unit of the Association of Teacher Educators. He has made state, regional, and national presentations on mentoring beginning teachers.

Frank J. Linn, Ed.D., has been associated with Southeast Missouri State University for 28 years, where he is a Professor in the Department of Educational Administration and Counseling. During that time, he served as Interim Director of the University Schools (grades K-12) for 1 year and had a 1-year appointment as Interim Chair of the Department of Education. He also served as advisor for all undergraduate elementary and special education majors for the College of Education for 3½ years. Prior to joining the faculty at Southeast Missouri State University, Linn taught in public elementary and secondary schools in southwest Missouri. He also served as elementary principal for 3 years and secondary principal for 7 years. He holds Bachelor of Arts and Master in Education degrees from Drury College, and a Doctor of Education degree from the University of Arkansas.

Margaret A. Theobald, Ed.D., has been at Southeast Missouri State University for the past 13 years and is an Associate Professor in the Department of Secondary Education. She was a teacher wjth middle-level students for more than 15 years in both public and parochial schools in Illinois and Missouri. She earned her doctorate at Illinois State University in the area of curriculum and instruction with an emphasis on education at the middle level. She has served in several positions with the Missouri Middle School Association and its executive board, including the offices of secretary and president, and is currently an ex-officio member as the university level representative. In her most recent research, she conducted a statewide survey regarding middle-level practices and trends. The Missouri Middle School Association published the results of this survey in its 1994 *Missouri Middle Level Practices and Trends: A Resource Directory*. She has made several presentations at both the state and national Middle School Association conferences and has published several articles in *The Transescent*, the state journal of the Missouri Middle School Association.

Organization and Structure

Traditionally, the concept of organization and structure of public schools in America has been limited to a grade configuration. Elementary schools have been thought of as Grades K-6, junior high schools as Grades 7-9, and senior high schools as Grades 10-12. When the middle school appeared on the scene, it was often limited in both theory and practice to some configuration of Grades 5-9. However, organizational structure involves much more than mere grade configurations. It has been defined as "the set of processes for organizing the time, space, and personnel in a school for instructional purposes" (Glatthorn & Spencer, 1986, p. 151). These processes include the basic structure of the school, teacher assignment, student assignment, and use of time.

The basic structure of the school may take various directions. The organizational structure may have been determined by the staff and be modified from time to time to meet the changing needs of programs, students, and teachers. The school may be divided into several smaller units of 100 to 200 students that spend most of the instructional day with a small group of teachers.

At the middle level, the trend is for teachers to be assigned to work together in interdisciplinary teams. They are given common planning periods to evaluate students and plan for instruction.

Members of interdisciplinary teams teach in one or two areas of competence, rather than being responsible for the entire range of disciplines within their areas of certification.

At the middle level, the trend is for students to be assigned to spend most of their learning time in heterogeneous groups with homogeneous grouping reserved for special needs.

Block scheduling is a trend as well for the organizational structure of middle schools. Blocks of time are allocated to teaching teams for greater flexibility in scheduling discipline within the block. Large blocks of time are allowed for core classes, with smaller blocks of time for exploratory classes.

Organizational Values

The rationale for organizational practices at the middle level of schooling is embedded in underlying values. These values, which underlie practices in needs-responsive middle schools, have been identified by George, Stevenson, Thompson, and Beane (1992, p. 39) as follows:

1. Students' healthy growth and development are paramount.
2. Optimism and positiveness prevail.
3. High expectations abound.
4. Adults understand and support the school's mission.
5. Teachers believe they make a difference.
6. People are empowered.
7. People pull together.

All of the above values are essential if the developmental and educational needs of middle-level students are to be met effectively, and principals must strive to make provision for the achievement of each of these values within the organization and structure of their schools.

Principals of exemplary middle schools have earned their authority and influence by successfully leading colleagues in the attainment of these values (George et al., 1992). Successful principals see

their major functions to be instructional leadership and securing autonomy for their schools. The securing of autonomy may be enhanced by the principal by exemplifying commitment to colleagues and their common vision, and shared decision-making. The sharing of these values by the principal and teachers enhances the provision for meeting developmental and educational needs of middle-level children.

Organizational Practices

As one observes the organizational structures of middle schools, a continuum may be constructed, with one end representing those schools that are different from junior high schools in only one respect—grade configuration. The other end of the continuum would represent those schools where all or most middle school concepts are present. Schools with varying numbers of middle school concepts would be plotted along the continuum.

It is the purpose of this section to identify and briefly describe some major concepts that are commonly associated with middle schools. These concepts include the advisor-advisee program, interdisciplinary teaming, and block scheduling.

Advisor-Advisee Programs

The advisor-advisee program in middle schools is the result of commitment to providing successful learning opportunities for students relative to their needs, interests, backgrounds, and life goals. The advisor-advisee program involves responsibilities of teacher advisors to students. According to Jenkins (1992), such responsibilities include the following:

1. Monitoring the academic progress of each student advisee to provide reinforcement, support, intervention, and help at appropriate times
2. Providing each student with an adult advocate who knows him or her personally and who will help him or her examine options and make responsible choices

3. Helping to plan programs of study that are based on the needs, interests, background, and aspirations of each student
4. Establishing a system of in-school communication wherein all professionals concerned with a student have systematic and consistent information to help the student succeed academically
5. Suggesting study techniques to each student for improving classwork and homework

These responsibilities can be translated into specific objectives that give direction to establishing, evaluating, and refining an advisement program. These objectives include the following:

1. Information is collected about each student from a variety of sources and used to develop individual educational plans.
2. All students are helped to develop career goals consistent with their talents and interests and based on a clear knowledge of economic and societal trends.
3. All students are helped to plan a program of studies in accordance with their goals, aspirations, strengths, and weaknesses.
4. The progress of students in academic areas that they take for credit is monitored on a regular basis by an adult who knows them well and who can help them make necessary adjustments.
5. A communication network is established among the teachers to share information that will help provide effective learning environments for the student.
6. The parents of each student are contacted on a regular basis by someone who knows their child's schoolwork well enough to provide information about the student's progress.
7. A system is established for continually evaluating the success of each student and used to make changes as appropriate.
8. All students have someone in the school with whom they can talk and who can arrange help for them from more qualified persons when needed.

9. Students' potential problems are handled in practical ways, and before the fact rather than in the aftermath of incidents.
10. Accurate and comprehensive information on all students is reported to colleges and universities, armed services, and other appropriate agencies.

The advisor-advisee program relies on a teacher-advisor or homeroom teacher. The advisor is typically responsible for 25 to 35 students. Time is provided for the advisor-advisee meetings to accomplish specific objectives such as those listed above.

An advisor-advisee program is used by administration and faculty of Sikeston Middle School in southeastern Missouri. According to Rodney Pensel, assistant principal of Sikeston Middle School, the advisor-advisee program is new in the school this year. The program takes place in the students' homeroom class, which is placed in the first period of the day. Two days a week, the class completes lessons on various topics; another two days a week, the class has a study hall period; and for the remaining day, the class has a socialization period.

The lessons focus on the following areas: orientation and organization of the school, group dynamics, goal setting, conflict resolution, communication, careers, and multicultural awareness. The lessons are presented in a curriculum notebook that is easy for the teacher to use and for the students to follow.

The socialization concept involves the division of the building into five teams. Each team has a team leader and consists of six or seven homeroom classes. One day a week, each team receives a socialization day. During the homeroom period, the teacher accompanies the students to the gymnasium, the cafeteria, the library, or to the playground. This allows the students to experience free time and yet structures such activities in a way that provides for faculty supervision. Mr. Pensel feels that Sikeston's advisor-advisee program is a success.

The advisor-advisee program at Arcadia Valley Middle School in southeastern Missouri is designed to meet the needs of students in the areas of guidance on grades, attendance, and interpersonal skills. Pat Mertens, principal of Arcadia Valley Middle School,

believes that advisory meetings should be interactive with discussion, student input, and brainstorming. Each meeting should have a key focus for interaction. Advisors are encouraged to schedule one-on-one sessions apart from the scheduled advisory meetings with students who request or require this attention.

Interdisciplinary Teaming

A commonly observed middle school concept is interdisciplinary teaming. An interdisciplinary team might include one language arts teacher, one social studies teacher, one science teacher, and one music teacher. These teams might plan and teach interdisciplinary units, or they might plan as a team but teach independently their respective disciplines.

The effectiveness of interdisciplinary teams is dependent on their development. Forte and Schurr (1993, p. 82) outline 14 points to remember when developing teams. These suggestions are as follows:

1. Team development is evolutionary and does not happen quickly.
2. Team members must be trained in the "art and science" of teaming so that they share the same vision and understanding of what teaming is all about.
3. Team effectiveness and team activities will vary from site to site because implementation of interdisciplinary teams is unique to each location.
4. Not every team member will embrace to the same degree the teaming concept and the empowerment that goes with it.
5. All team members must be assured that the teaming concept will improve work life and the performance of students.
6. Team development will not follow a straight path but will encounter ups and downs in its evolution.
7. Team leaders and administrators must model the behavior they want their team members to display.
8. Teams are often highly motivated at the beginning of their teaming experience, but they require constant guidance, training, and support from leaders.

9. Team members should complement, not clone, one another's styles, temperament, skills, talents, and interests.
10. Team members who do not work well together should have procedures or provisions for changing work assignments.
11. Teams should begin making easy decisions before they are faced with difficult decisions.
12. As teams develop, operating policies, procedures, and systems will need to be changed to allow for continued growth and empowerment.
13. Teams should emphasize communication as the "soul" of their existence both within the team and outside the team.
14. Teams must be rewarded for their successes.

Interdisciplinary teaming has been defined by Forte and Schurr (1993) as the "heart of the middle school" (p. 23). It involves the same group of teachers sharing the same group of students housed in the same part of the facility for the same block of daily instructional time. Teams vary in size from two to six teachers representing such core curriculum areas as language arts, science, and math, and serve as many as 70 to 150 students.

Interdisciplinary teams are not able to use effectively the traditional period schedule because of its inflexibility. Some type of modular schedule is usually needed for interdisciplinary teams. Some middle schools have adopted the modular schedule, which uses shorter time increments—usually 15 or 20 minutes. These increments are used as building blocks of the schools' schedules. Teachers can arrange a succession of modules for a particular subject or unit.

Block Scheduling

Most middle schools have found the block-of-time schedule to be easier to develop and implement than the modular schedule. The block-of-time schedule allows a team to share a group of students for an uninterrupted block of instructional time ranging from 120 min to 210 min each day (Forte & Schurr, 1993). Forte and Schurr (1993, p. 49) list 10 advantages of the block schedule, as follows:

1. Time is available at the beginning of the day for the advisor-advisee program.
2. All teachers have a common team planning and conference time.
3. Every teacher has a duty-free lunch.
4. Physical education and exploratory classes are shorter than core subject area classes.
5. Interdisciplinary teams have the flexibility and autonomy to schedule classes around curriculum needs.
6. Students can be grouped and regrouped for instruction.
7. Teachers can team teach in any given subject area.
8. Teachers can more easily integrate the disciplines.
9. Teachers can vary the instructional periods on an hourly, daily, or weekly basis.
10. Teachers can more easily schedule field trips, speakers, and community involvement projects.

They further contend that the block schedule is designed to accommodate a program that meets the needs and characteristics of middle-level children. The block schedule has three main parts: advisory, basic skills, and physical education or exploratory classes.

Ten-block scheduling is used by Perryville Junior High School in Perry County, Missouri. Perryville Junior High School is, in reality, a relatively new middle school. This is an example of a junior high school retaining its name, yet operating under the philosophy of the middle school.

According to Rick Francis, principal of Perryville Junior High School, the goals for the establishment of the 10-block schedule were to increase the number of exploratory classes available to students, to decrease the student-teacher ratio, to provide interdisciplinary team planning time, and to make the schedule more student centered instead of academic centered.

Summary

The middle school principal must be thoroughly familiar with the mission of middle-level schooling. The principal must under-

stand growth, development, and special needs of middle-level students, and must be familiar with concepts and practices designed to meet these special needs. The middle school principal must be able to exercise leadership in the establishment of an organizational structure conducive to growth, development, and learning during the middle years, which may be characterized as a transition from childhood to adulthood.

Leadership and Management

Middle-level students differ from those at elementary and high school levels. The evidence is clear that these children reach puberty earlier than did children at the time junior high schools were first conceived. Nevertheless, all students still do not arrive at puberty simultaneously. It is the special task of middle schools to protect, nurture, counsel, and teach these unique individuals. These are very meteoric but uneven years of growth in every dimension for children. The middle school principals, in whose charge are these transescent children, must be astute leaders and managers.

Perhaps no behavior has been so thoroughly studied or universally commended as leadership. Some books with many ancient references to leaders and leadership show clearly the long history of interest in this phenomenon. The military, business enterprises, the church, and, of course, government have long lauded leadership or decried its lack. Educators also have acknowledged the need for leadership, assessed administrators for this critical skill, and "taught it" in graduate programs for school administrators. Graduate departments of educational administration across the nation became so enamored with the notion a few years ago

that many changed their names to Departments of Educational Leadership.

Leadership without management, however, cannot sustain a professional level of performance or institutionalize change. Human and physical resources must have someone to organize the affairs of the enterprise. Someone must attend to the daily routines of the organization, keep the records, and account to patrons and superiors. It is the vital, albeit perhaps unglamorous, job of management to tend to the mundane tasks that operationalize leadership.

Leadership and management are twin characteristics of effective middle school principals. The middle school administrator shares these common attributes with school executives of all levels. This chapter, however, will focus on the exciting and rewarding job of the middle school principal.

Of course, leadership is a good thing—even critical to the human enterprise—but what exactly is leadership? What are the elements of leadership? If we all know what leadership is and can recognize it when we see it, what are its characteristics? Describe it! Define it!

Definitions

There have been many serious attempts to define leadership. Many of the earlier efforts attempted to discern the traits of great leaders. It was assumed that if these characteristics could be determined, we could teach them to others or at least identify persons with these traits and encourage them to become our leaders. After it became apparent that a study of leaders, evil ones as well as historically honored ones, produced no consensus of the key traits of sound leadership, scholars turned to studies of the content of leadership. They became interested in the social-psychological aspects of leaders and situations involving leadership. The scholars studied the knowledge possessed by leaders to determine if this characteristic accounted for someone stepping forward to exert leadership.

A review of the vast leadership literature can be somewhat discouraging. We are certain that leadership exists and is a characteristic needed by middle school principals, but the search for this Excalibur leadership sword is a daunting one. It has been well said

that leadership is a much observed phenomenon, but little understood.

The definition used in this book is based on one formulated by Rost (1993): "Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (p. 102). The reader must separate the leader from the group persona that is leadership. Leadership is a relationship in which the role of leader may shift from moment to moment among the participants, although the status leader (principal, for example) may be in the most favored position to initiate this relationship.

Closely allied with leadership is management. Well-managed schools are universally expected. If a school has a chaotic atmosphere, is dirty, has late or incorrectly delivered supplies, or possesses other characteristics that suggest no one is in charge, the principal is soon replaced. The inept principal may possess many other desirable traits as the official leader of the middle school, but the lack of managerial skills will quickly deny them the principal's office.

A middle school principal with managerial skills but little or no leadership knowledge or skill will likely continue in the post longer than one whose skills and interest are reversed. However, little or no staff growth or improvements in curriculum or instruction are likely to occur under the aegis of such a principal. This is often the case when school districts attempt to reorganize their basic structure by changing the names of their junior high schools to middle schools (perhaps with some increase in the span of grade levels included in the reorganized school), but with little or no understanding or commitment to middle school values. In short, they put in place "form without substance."

School management is herein defined as an authority relationship between the principal (superior) and faculty and staff (subordinates). It also refers to the principal's allocation of resources and the accounting processes that track both human activities and educational accoutrements. One objective of management is to coordinate and supervise teachers and staff in the day-to-day operation of the school. A second objective is to record and control the expenditure of educational materials. The term *supervise*, as used in the definition, is restricted to assessment and accountability—a man-

agement task. (The term may also refer to such leadership tasks as formative instructional support, staff competency enhancement, and curriculum development.)

A deliberate distinction is being made here between leadership and management. The two domains should interface smoothly in the effective middle school principal. Both domains are important to developing excellence in middle schools, and they are somewhat artificially separated here so that leadership and management of middle schools may be studied more clearly. A more explicit discussion of leadership and management in middle schools follows after a discussion of vision and mission.

Vision

The first requisite for an effective middle school is vision. The entire middle school community (pupils, parents, educators, and patrons) should be able to imagine the middle school they want to share. Leadership must be informed by vision or else the management activities it causes will be impotent and without sufficient synergy to cause real and sustained change. When the vision becomes common to the leaders and followers, a mission can be articulated in a way that will focus action. Middle school values become the polar stars that guide all decisions and actions. Without vision, mission statements, for example, are sterile and perfunctory—again, form without substance!

One of the findings of the research on effective schools has been that all personnel have a clear understanding of the mission of the school. They agree on what is valued in their school. Even the students, allowing for maturity, can inform a visitor of their school's mission. Where such a climate exists, it is also true that the stakeholders have "seen" the vision—they are enthusiasts. "Where there is no vision the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18a).

The first priority, then, in moving a district or school into the middle school mode is to help the community create the vision upon which it must continually draw succor. Take the time to help your constituency and colleagues develop an exciting vision of a middle school before embarking on its creation.

Mission

Where goest thou? Middle schools, like all social organizations, need direction to be effective. Those that have developed shared mission statements are much more effective than those with mandated missions. A critical leadership task of the middle school principal is that of developing, with the school's faculty, staff, and constituency, a mission statement for the school. If the term *mission statement* is shopworn and uninspiring to your colleagues, ask them to describe what a school for children in middle grades ought to value! Research indicates that when a group determines its purpose, it tends to work individually and cooperatively to attain that purpose. The resulting verbiage may not look imposing or appear that it took long to concoct, but it will be very meaningful and helpful to the middle school community if the stakeholders truly developed it. Lead your colleagues in the creation of a statement that expresses their corporate intentions for the middle-level students in their charge. Create a form with substance!

Good mission statements have four attributes. First, they are succinct. The brevity of the statements encourages others to read them and middle schoolers (adults and children) to recite them, or at least easily paraphrase them. Second, they portray the visions of the participants. The middle school community needs a clear conception of its goals. Third, the writing style is simple and clear so that everyone feels comfortable with it. A good mission statement uses qualitative rather than quantitative words. Finally, the statement should be broad enough to guide all decisions made in the school.

The following is an example of a fictitious middle school mission statement.

McHenry Middle School Mission Statement

McHenry Middle School will assist pupils in making a healthy transition from elementary school to high school, from childhood to young teenage citizens. McHenry Middle School embraces the fact that the pupils it serves are unique physically, socially, emotionally, and intellectually. The school has a safe and stimulating educational environment. McHenry pupils are self-respecting individuals who value others and their in-

dividuality. McHenry teachers and parents expect their pupils to reach their potential academically, physically, and emotionally. McHenry's mission depends upon and values the active participation of all of its pupils, parents, educators, and patrons.

Goals and Objectives

After a mission statement has been developed, the partners in the creation of the mission should translate it into long-range goals and short-range objectives. The goal statements will express broad concepts, such as "We expect all pupils to become high academic achievers" or "We expect all pupils to achieve at their maximum ability." The objectives should be stated in measurable specifics, such as "All pupils will raise their achievement scores one grade level this year" or "The average achievement level of each grade of the middle school will raise one full year." Clearly, the middle school community must assess, probably annually, the achievement of each objective. At this same time, the long-range goals should be revisited, modified in view of experience or changed circumstances, and approved anew. New or revised objectives for the next assessment cycle may then be formulated. The goals and objectives of the middle school are developmental and dynamic, that is, they are always evolving and resolving.

Vision, mission statements, goals, and objectives are prerequisite conditions for an effective middle school. Without their careful development and continuous nurturance, the school will function without focus and clear purpose, or even without a satisfying sense of identity. It is not the principal's responsibility alone to develop these three conditions or to assess them, but it is the principal's responsibility to lead in the processes that give birth to them and that operationalize them with effective management.

The Middle School Principalship

Ubben and Hughes (1992, p. 10) describe the school principalship as having five functions and two dimensions. The functions are curriculum development, instructional development, student

services, financial and facility management, and community relations. The functions take place through management behaviors or leadership behaviors of the principal.

The Dimension of Leadership

Leadership is dependent on the organization desiring to change. Unless the middle school community desires change, leadership does not exist. A well-managed school may be possible without the community intending to bring about change, but if change is expected, a leadership environment must exist. A school with a leadership climate implies continuous improvement rather than some phenomenon that takes place irregularly and randomly. The attitude of the middle school community should be that "We are never perfect and we live in an imperfect environment." Therefore, change for continuous improvement across the complete spectrum of the middle-level school should be sought deliberately and mutually by its citizens.

Although any member of the middle school community might take the initiative in promoting a particular change for improvement in which the principal will primarily play participating and supporting roles, it is clearly an official job expectation of the principal. The very title of this educator means "first in rank, chief or head" according to *Webster's New World Dictionary*. Therefore, it should be the middle school principal who most often initiates the change process, and thus leads. During the evaluation of the proposed change and the group's rejection, modification, and/or implementation of the proposal, the principal will alternate as leader and follower. Regarding these unselfish actions, it must be the principal who is ever vigilant in seeing that the middle school is adhering to its vision and mission. Because the environment is dynamic, the principal must engage in and initiate a continuous process with others in the middle school community.

The following fictitious case should illustrate how a leadership climate works to bring about continuous improvement through change.

Meg Russell, principal of McHenry Middle School, has recently received the results of last spring's state achievement

tests, and McHenry did well. Percentile averages for all grade levels were up in all of the tested areas except scientific knowledge. The general level of scientific literacy had not lost ground, but had not improved over the previous year. At a faculty meeting called to discuss the test results, Meg proposed that the entire curriculum should become "scientific rich." She explained that all units of instruction should have objectives linking that body of knowledge to the arenas of science. This led to animated discussion on the perceived pros and cons of this suggestion. The faculty agreed that they must address the issue. A change must be made so that a greater scientific literacy will be attained by their students than is indicated on the test results.

After the proposal had circulated several times, with most teachers expressing views, ideas, impediments, and so on, Jim Alton, a math and science teacher, proposed that he and Mary Ellen Smythe, a language arts teacher, prepare examples of science literacy objectives for several units in the curriculum bank. He indicated they would pick units from all grade levels.

There were numerous nods and verbal agreements to Jim's suggestion. Because Mary Ellen was agreeable, Meg said, "Good. Thanks, Jim and Mary Ellen. How soon do you think we might meet again to consider your objectives?" It was agreed that they would meet again in 2 weeks to revisit the proposal and to review the examples of science objectives for several units of instruction.

In the case above, Principal Russell initiated the leadership but did not try to dictate or manage a particular solution to this professional problem. The worth and esteem of the principal for her teachers is demonstrated in an environment where colleagues discussed reflectively a pedagogical question of their professional practice. The climate of her faculty meeting allowed any member to lead the group in considering a point of view. Jim, perhaps sensing that no closure was likely at this meeting, exerted leadership with his proposal that would allow for more information to be garnered and for his colleagues to have time to reflect further on Meg's proposal. Mary Ellen is a follower in Jim's proposal as, apparently, is a majority of the group. Meg, of course, agrees to follow this proposal,

and then reclaims the lead role by concluding the meeting with a plan for follow-up. This case follows the definition set forth above. There was, in this case, an influence relationship among the leader and followers, all of whom intend to change the circumstances related to science literacy for McHenry students.

Thus, in limitless scenarios, the principal can exert leadership in the middle school setting and also encourage others to lead. Personnel research has clearly found that teachers have better morale, are more loyal, and are more satisfied with their jobs when their self-worth is affirmed and their professional worth is valued. No better way is open to the middle school principal to create a vibrant and dedicated faculty than to create a leadership climate similar to that described in this chapter.

Although Ubben and Hughes's (1992) five functions of the principalship cut across both dimensions of the position, they do so in distinctively different ways. Curriculum development, instructional improvement, student services, financial and facility affairs, and community relations have aspects that should have the reflective and broad participation of the faculty and middle school community. These aspects fall into policy development, planning strategies, written goals and objectives, assessment reviews, and other broad and comprehensive decisions involving the five functions. The full faculty and often the entire middle school community need to be involved in these processes. These are issues within the leadership dimension where leaders and followers influence each other and bring about real, mutually agreed-on changes.

The Dimension of Management

The management job of the middle school principal is to plan, organize, staff, direct, distribute, and account for the available physical and human resources in an efficient and effective manner. Donald H. Eichhorn (1966), in one of the earliest books on the middle school, divided these "administrative" tasks into staff-personnel relations, school-community relations, physical plant utilization, fiscal considerations, and evaluation. No matter the subtopics used, management refers to those behaviors of the principal that make certain that the day-to-day activities of the middle school operate as smoothly as possible.

The middle school principal is responsible for planning and organizing the school day in ways that will most effectively permit the middle school community to pursue the agreed-on objectives. Class and/or instructional blocks must be developed to put in place a structure through which the curriculum may be engaged. Homeroom or other class cohort lists must be prepared. An individual daily (or other agreed-on block of time) class schedule must be prepared for each middle school and teacher. Textbooks and other teaching supplies must be allocated. Will the rhythm of the school day be directed by a system of bells? If so, when will they ring? If not, what will be the time schedule allotted for students to pass from one teacher or instructional team's care to another? When will lunch be served? Planning time must be scheduled for all faculty and instructional teams. Orientation must be planned for all new and transferred teachers and an opening school assembly scheduled. Faculty and student handbooks must be published, and parent nights planned. These are only a few of the management matters that the principal must do or arrange to have done.

Many of these organizing activities will not be decided in consultation with staff but are simply solo administrative decisions of the principal. Other organizing actions of the principal will merely be the implementing of decisions made in the leadership dimension when the staff or entire middle school community considered operating policies. Unless the principal organizes and plans well, the middle school will operate on a crisis-to-crisis basis. There are a couple of sayings that apply here: "The devil is in the details" and "Sweat the details." Middle school principals beware, the brightest of prospects for your middle school or middle school principalship will evaporate with the opening of the new school year unless you organize and plan in detail for the school's operations. A magic wand does not come with your appointment; the smoothly operating middle school comes only with thorough planning, organizing, and implementation.

The school principal is the person most responsible for the success or failure of the persons who work in the school. Hopefully, new professional or classified staff will be employed only after the principal has interviewed them and verified data about them. Contract renewals and tenure are normally awarded only with a positive

recommendation by the principal. Therefore, it behooves the middle school principal to engage very seriously in the behaviors that will ensure a highly qualified staff. The success of students depends on all of the adults in the school. Therefore, the principal should seek teachers with special educational preparation, clinical experience, and, when possible, successful teaching experience with transescent children. The classified staff should be people who accept the unique needs and characteristics of children embroiled in growth immediately before and after puberty. Public schooling is "labor intensive." Therefore, it depends primarily on human resources to accomplish the schooling mission. Competent and dedicated staff are a critical factor in the dynamic middle school community.

It deserves to be noted here that the appearance of the middle school will either enhance the school's climate or detract from it. The casual public will form an instant opinion about the school and its administrators based solely on the appearance of the school. The successful middle school principal will give continual attention to the maintenance and housekeeping of the school. The principal must create in the students the sense that this is "their" school and that it is the best school in the district. Students should believe that the school board recognizes their responsible citizenship by painting the classrooms, hallways, and other areas in clean, bright colors and by allowing them to design and paint murals in the school corridors. The citizens of the district and the superintendent will know how mature they are in the care of the building because of the absence of trash on the campus and the beautiful flowers and shrubbery. One of the soundest facts demonstrated in educational and psychological research is that humans tend to repeat behavior for which they are praised. Praise your middle schoolers for being the protectors of their school.

Finally, the middle school principal shares with colleagues throughout the district the responsibility of completing numerous reports. These tasks are often onerous to middle school principals because of their focus on instructional supervision. Nevertheless, the reports are managerial accounting activities that are vital functions, and they must be done on time and correctly. Time should be set aside by the principal to learn exactly how to complete these tasks. The principal should organize data collection processes that are channeled through the school office in an efficient and routine fash-

ion. Record keeping and reporting are vital tasks, but should not become the major activity or focus of the middle school principal. Learn what is expected by the central administration and when the material is due, and plan your time and organize your office staff to complete the reports with a minimum of drain on the central mission of the school and the principal's job.

One of the data collection and managerial activities that deserves to be addressed is handling money. Schools collect lunch money, vending machine money, and money from a number of student and parent activities. In a large school, the amount of cash handled every day by school lunch personnel and office staff can be quite large. We urge the principal to consult carefully with the district business manager or other appropriate people concerning ways to ensure the safe accounting of the funds and the integrity of the principal and members of the staff who engage in these activities. To err is a human truism, but the system of dealing with cash should have sufficient safeguards that errors are easily found, corrected, and accounted for properly. Do not be careless in these responsibilities.

Summary

The leadership and management of a middle school is an exciting and rewarding professional task. Leadership and management are not two sides of an administrative coin, but rather two dimensions of a principalship. Leadership is a relationship that the principal, teachers, and staff develop that allows each person to have an opportunity to influence the organizational decisions. The middle school principal is chiefly responsible for creating this environment. The principal should know when to initiate the process of change for improvement of the education of the transescent students and when to simply empower an initiative by others in middle school community. Middle school management relates to the principal's solo decisions and actions that organize and direct the daily operation of the school. Management is "instructed" by decisions resulting from leadership activities of the middle school community as well as from the directives of higher authorities of the school system.

Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum and instruction are the very heart and soul of education at the middle level. Curriculum involves all the experiences offered to students while under the leadership and auspices of middle-level principals, teachers, counselors, custodians, secretaries, other support staff, and parents. Instruction comprises the strategies and activities used in delivering the curriculum to students. At the apex of the junction with curriculum and instruction is the middle-level principal. The principal is the instructional leader (Garner & Bradley, 1991) and can make a real difference as to whether or not a middle-level school is effective in the development and delivery of the curriculum. Thus administrative support for curriculum and instruction at the middle level is vital if the special needs of middle-level students are to be satisfied.

Curriculum Perspectives

The historical and philosophical bases for curriculum in the middle-level school influence strongly both the climate and the organizational structure of the school. No consensus has ever been reached as to whether the junior high or middle school is essen-

tially an elementary or secondary school. As a matter of fact, the National Middle School Association (1982) stated that

> the history of the junior high school and even the early history of the middle school indicate clearly that a title or grade level designation without a focus on the needs of the learners to be served, does not make for an effective school. (p. 3)

The curriculum of the early junior high school was not bound by collegiate requirements or accreditation standards. Therefore, the curriculum could be more innovative with class schedules, course content, and curricular organization. In 1940, a statement for the junior high school was developed that described its functions. These included articulation, differentiation, integration of skills, exploration, guidance, and socialization. These functions were to provide the basis for curriculum development in the junior high school.

In the 1950s, critics of the junior high schools questioned whether the schools were meeting the needs of their students and serving as the transitional educational element between the elementary and the high school, as the junior high was originally intended to be. The 1960s became a decade of emergence for the new middle school. Proponents argued for reorganizing schools and reexamining their mission. Eichhorn (1966) provided the rationale for a middle school with student growth and development, and programmatic and philosophic insights.

A debate continued during the 1970s between those supporting existing junior high schools and those advocating a new middle-level concept. The most important thing was not the name of the school but the program it provided.

Those advocating a new middle school concept criticized the junior high for deemphasizing exploration. There was no evidence, however, that the middle school provided young adolescents with a better education than the junior high. The middle school had no special curriculum for itself, and there were very few differences between programs and practices of the junior high and the middle school. The essential concerns of both junior high and middle school advocates seemed to be in providing the most optimal setting and curricular experiences for meeting the physical, social, emotional,

and intellectual needs of young adolescents. By the 1980s, the National Middle School Association began to provide the focus and leadership for a curriculum that would best meet all of the needs of middle-level students.

The National Middle School Association (1982) established a committee to arrive at some consensus as to what is essential to a true middle-level school. The committee identified 10 characteristics:

1. Educators knowledgeable about and committed to transescents
2. A balanced curriculum based on transescent needs
3. A range of organizational arrangements
4. Varied instructional strategies
5. A full exploratory program
6. Comprehensive advising and counseling
7. Continuous progress for students
8. Evaluation procedures compatible with nature of transescents
9. Cooperative planning
10. Positive school climate

"A middle school must exhibit all of the essential elements to a considerable degree before it can claim to be effective in educating transescents" (National Middle School Association, 1982, p. 16). These elements are based on the beliefs that young adolescents have social, physical, emotional, and intellectual needs that can be met only through educational experiences different from those offered at either the elementary or secondary school.

In a report from the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989), titled *Turning Points*, the Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents made eight recommendations that would improve the educational experiences of young adolescents:

1. Create small communities for learning.
2. Teach a core academic program.
3. Ensure success for all students.

4. Empower teachers and administrators to make decisions about the experiences of middle-grade students.
5. Staff middle-grade schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents.
6. Improve academic performance through fostering the health and fitness of young adolescents.
7. Reengage families in the education of young adolescents.
8. Connect schools with communities.

Both *climate* and *organizational structures* influence the environment of a middle-level school. The principal's role is to direct, support, and promote a positive school climate as well as maintain an organizational structure that benefits young adolescents.

According to the National Association of Secondary School Principals' Council on Middle Level Education (1985), the climate of the middle-level school must be such that it "supports excellence and achievement rather than intellectual conformity and mediocrity" (p. 3). The council provided several suggestions for achieving this goal. Among other things, it recommended (a) rewarding all student performance, including academics, the arts, and athletics; (b) attempting to provide opportunities for each student to excel at something; (c) finding out what students can do and focusing on student capabilities; (d) finding opportunities for members of the school population to socially interact outside the classrooms; and (e) working to provide an atmosphere tolerant of diversity, an atmosphere that permeates an environment that is caring and supportive.

Because the principal is the administrative leader and the prime instructional influence in the middle-level school, the way in which a school and its operation are organized will affect significantly the members of the school community. The principal plays a major role as leader but knows how to allow the other members of the school community (teachers, students, parents, counselors, support staff, etc.) to maintain ownership and responsibility for the implementation of the total curriculum. To achieve a quality approach to organizational issues, the middle-level principal should be sure that an atmosphere exists in which all decisions in the school are made at

the lowest possible level (National Association of Secondary School Principals' Council on Middle Level Education, 1985). Counselors, teachers, and support staff should know that they have the authority and support of the principal to make decisions affecting them and the students with whom they are directly involved. Therefore, students, teachers, counselors, and support staff actually function in an effective middle-level school as smaller communities of people within the larger structure of the building itself.

Some of the criticism for the most typical grade configuration of a middle-level school, that of Grades 6, 7, and 8 (Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, & Melton, 1993), is that sixth graders are too immature and easily influenced by negative behaviors of seventh and eighth graders. The effective middle-level school addresses this concern by physically separating sixth-grade students from those in other grades. The sixth grade ought to be a smaller, separate community in the school. Students are nurtured through the middle-level transition by teams of teachers who get to know and understand each student on an individual basis. The seventh- and eighth-grade students are also teamed with small groups of teachers but participate with each other across the grades to a greater extent than those students in the sixth grade.

The team approach to management and instruction allows decisions about teachers and students to be made by teachers and students. Decisions made by teams can include everything from disciplinary affairs, curriculum development, use of instructional time, parent involvement, and other similar activities.

The principal's role in teaming is primarily the approach used in forming the teams. In a national survey conducted during the 1991-1992 school year (Valentine et al., 1993), it was found that membership on teams was most often an administrative decision; little teacher input on team membership was noted. In forming teams, the principal must keep in mind the personalities and experiences of its members. Once teams have been formed, the principal needs to lend support so that all teams know their roles and functions and can operate cohesively and effectively (Merenbloom, 1986).

Merenbloom (1988) stated that the principal is the key to providing administrative and supervisory support with both program development and staff development. He said that "the real chal-

lenge is to create and motivate a staff development program that actively involves the total faculty" (p. 28). If faculty members are to be leaders of teams that make influential decisions about the activities of team members, then faculty must be given encouragement and guidance in how to make responsible decisions. Effective faculty leadership, however, requires professional development. It is the principal's responsibility to see that faculty members have opportunities to learn how to be team leaders.

Curriculum Development

The focus of the content in curriculum development as well as the approaches to planning its implementation influence the ultimate outcome of what students experience. In a middle-level school, additional activities, such as those motivated with guidance, exploratory, cocurricular, and transitional programs, provide additional experiences for these students.

The focus of the content of a curriculum is usually an academic-centered base with knowledge of subject matter of prime importance in learning. However, in the middle-level school, the curriculum must be developed so that it is also student centered. That means the interests of students must be an integral part of planning the curriculum. It is the very nature of a middle-level school that meeting the various needs and interests of young adolescents is the primary focus of its curriculum.

In 1993, Beane wrote that academics as the center of the curriculum evolved from a philosophy of classical humanism. This viewpoint held that content or subject matter was the basis for the best education for the people. Essentially, what people needed to know would be formal in the subject areas. Beane (1993) said that the academic-centered approach distorts life and that learning in life is actually a continuous "flow of experiences around situations that require problem-solving in both large and small ways" (p. 45). It was the traditional subject-centered curriculum of the junior high school that led to a reform approach to teaching and learning in the middle school. It was relatively easy for a middle-level principal to orchestrate and supervise a schedule of isolated academic subjects.

It is not as easy to correlate and lead a curriculum focusing on the student through interdisciplinary teaming and block scheduling.

When it comes to scheduling, the principal is the key person responsible for blocking appropriate time in the schedule so that teams can be most effective with instruction. In the middle-level school, it is not necessary for interdisciplinary teams of teachers to be scheduled to teach at the same time, although it is advisable (Merenbloom, 1986). Scheduling involves consideration of all activities in the school, both curricular and cocurricular. Guidance, exploratory, cocurricular, and transitional programs need to be worked into the regular school day. The principal's skill in coordinating all these components of the curriculum is essential.

The basic concept and philosophy of a middle school places student needs at the forefront. The effective middle-level school curriculum is characterized by a program that addresses various physical, cognitive, social, and emotional needs of the learner. Also, the curriculum not only contains facts, knowledge, or skills that students should know and/or be able to do but also correlates all these skills with one another (Merenbloom, 1986).

The principal's role in terms of the focus of curriculum content is to be sure that the philosophy of the school permeates the planning and implementation of the curriculum. Help and support from the principal are essential as the school teams design, implement, and evaluate curricular efforts in the middle-level school.

It is important that the principal believe in open communication and convey to the staff that they have the ability to carry out curricular responsibilities. The principal needs to assure the staff of their worth and offer time and assistance when needed (Garner & Bradley, 1991).

Several approaches to planning in the middle-level school have emerged during the 1980s and 1990s. The two that are more prominent are multidisciplinary and integrative approaches.

The multidisciplinary approach to curriculum development uses all of the disciplines in the school in such a way that they support one another. This approach is used usually on a short-term basis for units of a few days to a week or several weeks. Interdisciplinary units usually are more stimulating and motivating to students because they offer more comprehensive experiences for students

than do single-subject unit designs. The main problem with interdisciplinary units is that the units take time to plan and extra energy on the part of the planners to implement. This is where the middle-level principal can be supportive in finding alternative ways to provide time for teachers to plan together. Sometimes principals will teach a class for a teacher while that teacher meets with one already free to plan. On other occasions, the principal and/or counselor will team to work with several groups of students so that their respective teachers can work together at the same time. If the principal plans teacher schedules effectively, a common planning time is built into the schedule. However, principals must understand that common planning time for teachers does not replace a period of personal planning time, but is instead an additional work period.

Integration of knowledge is the most recent approach to curricular planning. Unlike the multidisciplinary approach to curriculum planning, where short-termed units of study are developed and delivered among several disciplines, the integrative approach uses a specific theme or focus. It is the integration of the disciplines that makes this approach to planning a coordinated effort. There are several steps that can be followed toward the process of integrating the curriculum. Interdisciplinary units need to be designed that follow a specific focus or theme. Associations between existing curricular areas should be brainstormed, followed by the development of a scope and sequence. Activities for instruction should be coordinated that consider prerequisite skills for students, multiple teaching strategies, and appropriate and relevant assessment tools for learning. Stevenson and Carr (1993) developed integrated studies with a topic or theme that was interesting to students. The interests and questions of students came first, and then content and skills were developed.

There are some limitations of integrated studies. Forced integration when it distracts students from the intent of the lessons should be avoided. Educators must make decisions on what to integrate, how much to integrate, and when to integrate knowledge.

The middle-level principal must be knowledgeable about various curricular approaches to planning and must provide the support that teachers and students need to develop a curriculum that has connections and is meaningful. The principal can help by providing

time for teachers to plan their curricular units, inservice for teachers who need additional training, expert consultation, assistance in obtaining necessary materials, and a high level of support and encouragement through the process of curricular planning (Garner & Bradley, 1991).

Complementing the academic areas of the middle-level curriculum are the additional experiences for students: guidance, exploratory, cocurricular, and transitional programs. An effective middle school encompasses all of these.

Guidance activities such as peer tutoring, peer counseling, and transitional and advisor-advisee programs in the middle-level school are primarily conducted by, through, or with the counselor. One of the main thrusts of the late 1980s and early 1990s has been the advisor-advisee program. The basic premise for this program is that each student should have a warm, caring, understanding relationship with at least one adult in the school (George & Alexander, 1993). Although the advisor-advisee program was rated as a very important to important characteristic of instruction in an effective middle-level school by 26% of principals in a national survey (Valentine et al., 1993), the program has had its problems. Some principals have been too quick to implement the advisor-advisee program with faculty and staff who were ill prepared to lead the activities of an effective advisor-advisee program. Principals need to be knowledgeable about the essential elements of successful advisor-advisee programs before attempting full-scale implementation of a program. Staff development in this area is necessary and the timetable for incorporating the program should be slow.

Experiences for students that provide curricular opportunities in addition to the basic core of subjects are considered part of the exploratory program. The arts, music, computer activities, drama, and similar subjects usually make up the content of exploratory courses. The National Middle School Association (1982) identifies "a full exploratory program" (p. 12) as an essential element of an effective middle-level school. The association also advocates that exploratory activities be included in regular coursework as well as through other courses. The efforts of the middle-level principal are important to the support of exploratory activities because talent in conducting these experiences may be found in people beyond the

regular faculty. The principal's public relations skills are useful in obtaining the cooperation of parents, community leaders, other citizens, and perhaps the support staff in providing leadership for exploratory experiences.

Cocurricular programs take place during the school day and give students the opportunities to participate in clubs and organizations of interest to them. The middle-level principal must view cocurricular programs as opportunities for students to develop leadership skills and special interests. The principal needs to support the program by encouraging the development of new clubs and organizations, providing motivation to existing clubs, and planning a schedule that offers students ample time for these activities.

The middle-level school is responsible for ensuring a smooth transition from elementary to high school. Consequently, transitional programs are being implemented by schools to help students in the lowest grade in the middle school adapt to a new environment. Transitional programs also are being developed to assist the students in the highest grade in the middle-level school to get ready for the move to high school. The middle-level principal can lend some leadership by forming a committee of parents and teachers to identify problems of transition in the local district and to recommend ways to alleviate the difficulties for students (National Association of Secondary School Principals' Council on Middle Level Education, 1985).

Instruction

Curriculum development is useless without appropriate delivery. Successful strategies used in teaching young adolescents and skill acquisition on the part of students are important to learning.

Meeting the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs of young adolescents and altering basic teaching methods to include cooperative learning are essential to successful teaching with young adolescents. Physical needs of young adolescents can be met through psychomotor activities. This means the principal should expect that once in a while students in a classroom may not be sitting quietly at their desks, which may not be lined up in rows.

Students need to move about, and not just in a physical education class! Principals must recognize the importance of physical movement and encourage teachers to allow activities that require students to move about in the learning environment.

Young adolescents have social needs that can be met in a variety of ways. Experiences in the exploratory program or cocurricular activities address this need through peer and adult interaction. Teachers can provide opportunities for students to work in small groups. Cooperative and active learning experiences also address social needs because students work with and learn from one another (Gilstrap, Bierman, & McKnight, 1992). The middle-level principal must know and understand the objectives of cooperative and active learning, and the principal must recognize their contributions to learning. Only then can a teacher be free to use these methods in the classroom without fear of retribution for a class that may appear to be unruly. Middle-level principals need to support as well as encourage the efforts of teachers to involve students fully in their own learning through active and cooperative activities.

The emotional needs of young adolescents, such as acceptance and respect, are numerous. Meeting these needs is truly a challenge for school personnel. Teachers can address these needs in part by helping students learn how to study and organize their time. Teachers should also avoid creating excessively stressful situations for students. Demanding brief periods of concentration on a task rather than long stretches of time, for example, may prove to be beneficial to the student. Providing activities in which students have to make choices while recognizing consequences and allowing students the freedom to do so will satisfy some of their emotional needs.

The intellectual needs of students can be met in a variety of ways. Teachers can be helpful by using interventions such as mnemonic devices to enhance information-processing skills and teaching students the process of planning through activities designed for each stage of development; this will enhance logic and reasoning abilities. Teachers should also provide time for supervised study or skill practice. They should maintain instruction on a concrete level, where middle-level students tend to function more effectively, rather than on the abstract level. Teachers can make learning interesting by providing a variety of alternative activities to match the

wide range of intellectual abilities of students in the class. Principals must know and understand the various needs of young adolescents so that encouragement and support can be provided to teachers and so they can develop classroom techniques to meet those student needs.

Lectures, discussions, games, skill practice, and use of audiovisual media are basic instructional strategies used in the typical classroom. For success with young adolescents, these teaching methods must be altered to meet the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs of students. Principals need to remind teachers to be cognizant of strategies used and their connections to maximizing student learning.

Beane (1993) stated that students need to apply a variety of skills to explore fully themes in the curriculum. Personal, social, and technical skills are necessary for young adolescents to survive in the world of the 1990s and beyond. Teachers need to provide activities that assist the student in developing the skills of reading, researching, writing, computing, listening, communicating, and problem solving. In addition to these, Beane (1993) stated that "since a 'living' curriculum calls for more than just 'knowing,' other less commonly emphasized skills are also called for" (p. 60). These additional skills include reflective thinking, critical ethics, valuing, and social action skills. Beane (1993) further stated that

> skills are only worthwhile when they are actually applied to real situations and, further, that they are most likely to be learned when they are so applied. In other words, the learning and valuing of skills are most likely assured if they are placed in a functional context where their application is immediate and compelling. (p. 63)

Administrative Support

There are two main areas in which the middle-level principal can provide support to effective curriculum development and instruction: scheduling practices and professional development activities.

Merenbloom (1986) suggests several ways for principals to schedule blocks of time so that teachers can do team planning. A

principal may have to revise the master schedule if cocurricular or advisory time needs to be built into it. Once a schedule has been set to allow teachers both team and personal planning time, some principals have found other small blocks of time for cocurricular or advisory time by reducing the time between classes, beginning the day slightly earlier, ending the day slightly later, or rescheduling lunch periods. The best way for principals to learn how to adjust the school schedule to accommodate new practices is to attend conferences and workshops on block scheduling and to talk with other principals who have successfully planned a middle school schedule. A middle-level principal should be flexible, open, and receptive to trying new and different approaches to creative scheduling.

An effective middle-level principal will encourage teachers to try new strategies that will help meet the needs of young adolescents. Encouraging teachers to read current information about middle-level practices and trends by providing journals or copies of relevant articles may motivate teachers to continue to explore alternative ways of teaching and learning. Inservice workshops conducted by experts and provided during part of the school day will add to the knowledge base and teaching repertoire of the faculty. In addition, principals can also encourage teachers to attend state and/or national conferences by providing monetary assistance and by expecting them to share what they learned with their colleagues.

Summary

The principal is the leader for curriculum and instruction. George and Alexander (1993) said that effective middle-level leadership has as one of its important behaviors "planning the school program and developing effective implementation strategies in such a way as to create a unique and effective learning environment based on the characteristics of young adolescents, and evaluating the success of the school in achieving its objectives" (p. 497). Middle-level principals must know and understand young adolescents and help provide a positive and supportive environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

Professional Staff

In any organization, team building, communication, involvement, and supervision are critical to success. These are the topics for this chapter, and they are critical areas for the middle school principal to address when working with the professional staff, students, and parents.

The middle school principal must work to develop a relationship of mutual trust with the faculty. This will be important to a good team spirit, effective communication, and supervision that leads to professional growth. It is important at any level, but because young adolescents need personal and caring contact with adults and sufficient structure to cope with a wide range of behavior, it is critical at the middle school level.

Building the Team: Everyone on the Same Page

So you're the new middle school principal? Whether you are new to the district or just new to the job, a first concern must be building an educational team that should include everyone connected with the school, from parents to teachers to students to noncertificated staff. The focus here is on the professional staff. For a

team to function, all members must have the same script, playbook, agenda, and directions. Furthermore, they must be on the same page.

What are the implications for the principal? The middle-level principal must remember that the environment must be responsive to the unique needs and interests of young adolescent students. The environment must have enough structure so that students feel safe and secure, but it should also be informal enough so that students feel free to interact with the adults in the school. With this information as a basis, the principal and staff must visualize the school as it ultimately should be, given the information about the school and its philosophy and goals. The staff should also be reminded to consider the unique needs of students. It would behoove the principal to provide information through inservice and faculty meetings about the unique needs of middle school-aged students and ways to meet those needs.

Building a school team requires that people share common goals but be allowed to be creative in reaching them. Building a team requires that everyone be treated with respect and that each person recognizes that he or she is a part of the schooling process. Thinking of teaching and schooling as a process implies that a series of actions, elements, and functions working together is needed to realize desired outcomes. The middle school principal should strive to create a school environment in which strong relationships of mutual respect and trust exist.

Recruitment of Staff

When recruiting staff, it is necessary for the leader to know what page he or she is on and to find people who are willing and capable of working on that page. Sometimes it means aggressively recruiting people who fit the organization or who have the qualities that the organization needs. Obviously, there is strength in staff diversity in terms of age, sex, race, cultural background, and interests. However, care must be taken to recruit staff who are able to either work within the philosophy of the school or work cooperatively and contribute effectively to modify that philosophy. It is wise to have a good mix of staff when possible in terms of age, experience,

race, gender, university attended, and special abilities. Various student activities require special abilities and must have staff to direct them. Generally, a principal will have to replace only a few staff members annually, but over time a staff can be assembled that enhances the school climate and helps the middle school realize its mission. Occasionally, a new building is opened and one has the opportunity to bring together an entirely new team. If that is the case, it is necessary to bring together people of various levels of experience, training, and special abilities. Above all, care should be taken to select teachers who show an inclination to work with young adolescent students. Coursework, clinical field experiences, and other experiences with this age group should enhance a candidate's qualifications; it may be as important to look for teachers who have a sense of humor, energy, and enthusiasm. These are good characteristics for any teacher, but they are especially important for the middle-level teacher.

Interviews and the careful study of transcripts and credentials are recommended ways to find teachers with those desirable traits. Some principals have found that being able to observe a candidate who is doing student teaching is a tremendous help in selecting good teachers. Videotaping of candidates interacting with a group of young adolescent students also may prove helpful. We seldom get the chance to observe a teacher in the act of teaching before making employment decisions. If direct observation is not feasible, interviews with questions built around a described classroom problem can be helpful in getting an idea of how the person would perform in various circumstances. The interviewer may want to find out whether the teacher emphasizes people over things, is able to tolerate and deal with ambiguity, and can consistently refrain from jumping to conclusions with insufficient information. Another interesting concept is that one can get a good reading on the quality of a teacher by seeing how the teacher relates to a small group of teachers who are known to be good. This is a way in which a committee of the faculty could participate at least informally in the selection process. If interdisciplinary units are to be used, teachers must be able to work together.

Orientation of Staff

Whether there are 3 or 30 new faculty members, the orientation of new faculty is important. Good orientation saves time later for the principal, allays apprehensions and improves confidence of new teachers, and helps the new teacher get off to a good start. Orientation may include tours of the school and community; examination of the school's goals, culture, and policies; help in locating material and resources; meeting professional and noncertificated staff; and being assigned a mentor. Many districts have meetings for new faculty before others report, and building principals generally find it helpful to meet with new faculty prior to meeting with the whole staff. The principal should have materials prepared that answer many questions a new teacher might have.

Faculty meetings should be well planned. Part of the planning could include time for refreshments and getting acquainted, or it could remain informal as fits the style of the principal. An agenda should be prepared and followed. Giving instructions to new teachers is a time when the principal can model the behaviors expected of teachers, including enthusiasm, having materials readily available, showing courtesy, and building a basis for mutual respect. Humor can be helpful if it fits the style of the principal and is in good taste. It should never suggest that the principal is not serious about the schooling process. It should, however, indicate that the principal is human and approachable. This is a time when good communication skills can help build a team spirit and give clear direction for staff. In some respects, this session is as important as the teacher's first meeting with students. It is well documented in literature and in experience that the first day of class sets the tone and that a well-planned beginning saves time later in the classroom. The same is true of a good orientation session for staff.

Assigning a mentor is another important part of new teacher orientation, especially if the new staff member is a first-year teacher. However, any new staff member can benefit from a helping hand from an experienced teacher. The assigning of a mentor is important in terms of getting the new teacher associated with a positive role model.

A first-year teacher, who had just signed a contract, related how much she appreciated a long letter from the principal that included several details about the school. The letter gave her confidence that she had made the right decision in signing a contract with that school district, rather than a nearby district that had a better salary schedule. Incidentally, the teacher, who seems to be an outstanding prospect, chose the school because the principal showed more excitement, sensitivity, and courtesy than the other principal.

Beginning teachers need to develop professional satisfaction with their commitment to teaching. They need to be integrated into the culture of a school system, and they need to grow as professionals and improve teaching skills.

Orientation of Students

Although the orientation of staff rather than students is a focus of this chapter, orientation of students through handbooks, assemblies, or class meetings should not be overlooked as a tool of staff orientation. Modeling expected interaction with students sends a message to teachers and helps establish mutual respect. Students need to be made to feel that the principal and staff are glad to see them back. A smile and other signs of a positive attitude and enthusiasm are important in conveying the expectations and culture of the school. Also, there should be a sense of urgency displayed by principal and staff. This attitude says that we have much to do, much to learn, and that we must be continually "taking care of business," but it should also say that our business is pleasant.

Student-Teacher Relationships

One important reason for having good orientation sessions with students with staff present is that one can model ideal student-staff relationships. Students should hear praise about the preparation, experience, and caring of the faculty. They should be given the message by the principal that reasonable suggestions and directions by teachers should be followed and that no unreasonable directions will be given. Students should feel that the principal supports

the teachers, and the teachers should feel that students are to show and be shown respect and courtesy. Good student-teacher relationships depend heavily on well-thought-out rules, good communication of those rules, and consistent enforcement of appropriate consequences for disobeying rules. It is also necessary for teachers to have a good understanding of human growth and development as it relates to young adolescents. Student involvement in establishing rules and consequences for misbehavior is important at the middle level. Within parameters established by the staff, input by students makes them a part of the team.

Good student-teacher relations depend in large measure on the teacher's understanding of middle-school-aged youngsters. The fact that in a 3-year span one may find a vast difference in physical and social maturity has implications for the variety of instructional activities that are used. There are also implications for how to appeal to the students' interests, which are sure to change over the school year. It is also important for the teacher to be prepared for mood changes and the changes some students will undergo in terms of how they view their teachers and parents in the course of the middle school years.

Someone has said that during the childhood years, children view their parents and teachers as perfect and wise, but as they find that adults are fallible, they pass to a period in which they view any adult opinion as suspect. One has to smile when parents make the statement that before their children went to that middle school, they were good students, well behaved, and respectful; and that they are now moody, rebellious, and surly. What is that school doing to them? Should we eliminate middle schools?

A research scientist at the University of Michigan Center for Group Dynamics found a number of mismatches between the developmental needs of adolescents and the typical junior high environment (Eccles, 1994). The researcher found that although students' desires for autonomy and independence increased, students and teachers reported less opportunity for students to participate in class decision-making in the seventh grade than in the sixth grade. Even though children in their early teens have a strong need for close relationships with adults outside the home, in many junior highs with departmentalization, students have less chance for close con-

tact with teachers. Although early teens are highly self-conscious, forever comparing themselves to peers, some practices in schools focus on public evaluation and competition. In the study, female students who were more physically mature felt they had the fewest opportunities to make decisions.

What are the implications for the principal in terms of organizing programs to enhance relationships of students and staff? The challenge is to accommodate needs without losing sight of what is necessary for high academic achievement. Certainly there is the possibility of using student organizations as a channel for contributing to the rules of the school. There is the potential for assignment of students to homerooms in small groups, where they can interact with an adult on a personal level. There is also the challenge to make activities—sports and others—available in an atmosphere not supercharged with competition, but in an environment where all can participate with a minimum of public evaluation. These are simple possibilities, but a principal with an interested and understanding faculty can help ensure that practice in the school is consistent with what we know about student needs and characteristics.

Morale Building

Morale is difficult to define, but one can see signs of high and low morale. Four teachers are observed walking briskly down the hall after school, talking and laughing as they exercise—a sign of good morale. A faculty meeting after school is tense, with not many smiles. As the meeting proceeds, one notes indifference and antagonism—a sign of low morale.

What can the principal do to keep spirits up?

1. Never have a faculty meeting without refreshments. It's amazing how a cookie can sweeten a disposition.
2. A little humor in good taste at the principal's expense can lift spirits. On an announcement sheet, one principal wrote: "When the bell rings at the end of third hour, students will go directly to the auditorium. Do not pass go. Do not collect $200." Students and staff reacted favorably to the attempt at humor.

3. Be cheerful, enthusiastic, and upbeat. Make a point to call each faculty member by name in a greeting once a day. Express appreciation in a low-key, sincere manner. One principal said that he tried to be so nice to students routinely that he didn't have to be "too mean" to show them that they had misbehaved.
4. Healthy organizations have heroes, stories, rituals, and symbols that help celebrate what is valued. The principal can encourage these expressions.

Good morale is important in schools at every level. However, it may be more important for the middle school than any other. Differences in student maturity and the emotional highs and lows of the early adolescent may tend to generate more stress for teachers in the middle school. A positive, supportive principal and good staff morale can be helpful in stress reduction.

Communication With Students and Staff: A Common Language

Who's on first? That's right! What's the guy's name on second base? Absolutely! And so it goes. Even when we are serious, we have difficulty communicating with one another. Even when the message is communicated, the intent and feeling to be conveyed is sometimes misunderstood. The language we use should be consistent with the mission of the school, our beliefs about students, and our consideration for the professional staff.

If we believe that students should learn appropriate written and spoken language, and correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling, then this must be modeled for students. If we believe that student learning and well-being are important, and that all students can learn, then what we say and write should demonstrate those beliefs. If we believe that the tone and culture of the school is important, then what we say and how we say it should enhance that environment. The language of principal and staff should be consistent with each other as well as consistent with their beliefs and actions.

Specifically, when the principal speaks to a group of students or addresses the faculty, it must be clear that preparation has been made, that the tone of voice is cheerful and enthusiastic, and that the first few sentences are smooth, well rehearsed, and attention getting. The principal should also remember that the elapsed time in a meeting always seems shorter to the speaker than the listener. To expect middle school students (or faculty, for that matter) to sit longer than 15 minutes without activity, humor, excitement, or acrobatics is fantasy.

Language should also demonstrate sensitivity to the feelings of others even in the midst of settling arguments or disagreements. It is interesting to note the reaction of parents to the statement, "Your son lied to me," as compared to "I don't believe that the report you received was really what happened." One parent, who asserted, "My son will not lie to me," showed a marked change in attitude when the principal said, "Well, I'm sorry to say that I have experienced my own children not telling me the truth about a situation." This simply illustrates how choice of words can change the response that is evoked. It is helpful if the middle-level principal remembers that parents of students in the middle school are experiencing one of life's milestones and that students who as children have been very compliant are starting to question, rebel, and assert themselves. This realization should help the principal and staff not only deal with parents in a more sensitive and understanding manner but also speak with one voice.

Teacher Involvement: Quality Decision-Making

When we speak of involvement, we could mean involvement in the problems of students, involvement in the community, or involvement in the decision-making of the school. Teachers have always been encouraged to be involved with students and the community, but they have not always been encouraged to be involved in decisions about the school. Some have not seen it as their role, whereas others have not welcomed the additional time commitment it requires. Many are not involved because principals have not asked for or encouraged it. In the past, asking for participation has been seen as

a sign of weakness in a leader. Many now realize that it requires a good deal of confidence and strength to share decision-making and to admit that "we" may be smarter than "me."

People who participate in planning are more likely to feel a responsibility for the results of action taken by the group. This relates to one aspect of total quality management: When things go wrong, we do not look for individuals to blame; instead, we look for weaknesses in the system that may have contributed to the problem.

To share decision-making requires that the organization and leader value openness: openness to participation, openness to reflection, and openness to mistakes (Patterson, 1993). Before teachers can become involved, they must feel comfortable with participating in discussion and feel free to express opinions. Furthermore, they must know that diverse opinions are welcomed. Diversity of opinion may give rise to conflict, but the principal who is committed to shared decision-making must expect some conflict. Good decision-making requires openness to reflection, which means that decisions must not be rushed. People must have time to reflect on the pros and cons of a course of action. Finally, by modeling, the principal must demonstrate that risk taking is required and that mistakes are allowed. This can be demonstrated by the principal's willingness to admit mistakes.

When decision-making is shared, so must the responsibility for calling into question unacceptable behavior by any individual. Furthermore, teachers who choose to participate must not leave the principal to make only the tough decisions that no one else wants to make. If principals allow full participation, one requirement is that there should be a feeling that everyone is in this together. When the principal truly invites participation and responsibility is truly shared, then quality decision-making can occur. Problems can be seen as occasions to work together and occasions to examine elements in the organizational process that may need to be changed.

The same understanding must be present if a staff decides to involve students and parents in the decision-making process of the school. One junior high school developed an extensive parent network that worked and supported the school and provided supervised outlets for student recreation outside school. The network

agreed on certain rules for parties for teens, and parents helped students in making responsible decisions. The principal and staff worked closely with this network to the advantage of everyone. This kind of cooperation depends on a common vision for the school that is shared by the staff and community.

One example of working together is interdisciplinary teaming of staff to provide authentic learning experiences for students. That is, when disciplines are combined to solve a problem, we are modeling the real-life use of knowledge. In the real world, we don't organize our day by doing all our mathematical calculations from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m., our reading from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m., and studying ways to be a good citizen from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. We continually combine our calculations, our reading, and our civic values to address situations that we meet each day. When teachers can work together, not only do we provide real-life experiences, but we also add excitement to the classroom. There is widespread agreement that collegiality among teachers is an important ingredient in promoting better working conditions and improving teaching practice and student achievement. If this is to happen, principals must involve teachers in deciding if, when, and how it will happen.

Supervision: Must Medicine Taste Bad?

Although it may seem true, medicine does not have to always taste bad to be good for you. Supervision has been the prescription most often recommended for the ills of our schools over the past several years. The literature of the business world says that employees come to realize something is important if the supervisor pays attention to it. Furthermore, it is asserted that supervision as educational leadership is a correlate of an effective school. The wave of performance-based teacher evaluation models reflects the roles of accountability and evaluation that supervision has taken over the past 2 decades. The various states have mandated the accountability role for supervision; however, supervisors in many areas have moved to a collegial model based on a desire to share the responsibility for improving instruction.

Can supervisors be tough and caring at the same time? Can the person who makes the employment decision be a trusted colleague whose role is to help us improve? How can we maintain accountability and still be supportive and helpful in the development of a good teacher? A principal may choose to allow peer evaluation for the formative stage and have the administrative staff do the summative evaluation.

Another principal addresses the problem of supervision for employment and supervision for growth and development by making it clear that observations and feedback from the principal will be aimed at professional growth and improvement of instruction. However, the principal promises to advise the teacher if things are not going well and to inform the teacher if evaluations become the basis for documentation for employment decisions. These methods are mentioned to illustrate that many principals feel uncomfortable in the supervisory role when they must wear the hat of employer as well as colleague.

Some administrators, as mentioned, have moved beyond a hierarchical model of authority to an inclusive, collegial model. Principals would be well-advised to consult the literature describing various models. As an example, Grimmett, Rostad, and Ford (1992) describe the approach to supervision and evaluation of a Canadian school district. A committee of administrators and teachers recommended that a summative evaluation be replaced by a process emphasizing professional growth and involving teachers working with other teachers. Each teacher developed a personal growth plan. The professional growth program involved school-based professional growth teams and a model of collaboration that incorporated reflective dialogue, classroom visitations, and collegial consultation. Training and the opportunity to do peer observations and consultation was provided.

The use of critical friends who raise questions, critique work, and provide feedback can enhance professional growth. Teachers use critical friends to plan and reflect on their own professional development. The use of cognitive coaching to help teachers explore the thinking behind their practices is also useful. When teachers talk about their thinking during a lesson, their decisions become clearer to them and their awareness increases. The literature on

mentoring beginning teachers offers suggestions that can be useful for giving effective feedback and encouraging reflection on the part of the teacher as well as environmental and psychological factors important to the mentor-protégé situation. These models can be helpful to the principal who wishes to use a collaborative approach and who involves teachers in their own professional growth.

Staff Development

Recent literature on supervision speaks less about evaluation and more about staff development and professional growth. A principal must recognize the value of staff development as a vehicle for change and renewal. Staff development by definition should involve input from staff about inservice needs. However, an important basis for selection of staff development activities is the classroom observation by principals and peers. The wise principal will visit classrooms enough to determine the competence of staff, but professional growth should be the responsibility of all members of the staff.

Summary

The middle-level principal must build a team that understands the needs of students, and this begins with the selection and orientation of staff. There must be communication and mutual trust, which can take place if there is an openness that invites involvement by staff in making decisions about the operation of the school as well as their own professional development. The best opportunity for professional growth is the use of teachers helping teachers. For this to work, teachers and principals should have a shared vision of the school's goals. One should not overlook the need for staff training in observation, conferencing, and providing feedback to colleagues.

School-Community Relations

A review of the literature dealing with school-community relations, or public relations as it is most commonly known, provides us with a variety of definitions. Lober (1993, p. 2) refers to the National School Public Relations Association's concept, which offers school administrators a succinct description of the complex and crucial subject of school-community relations: "A planned and systematic two-way process of communications between an educational organization and its internal and external publics designed to build morale, goodwill, understanding and support for the organization." An examination of this statement provides the reader with an overall picture of what school-community relations or public relations is: keeping both the school and its various "publics" informed about educational program strengths and weaknesses and community needs and desires, as well as fostering positive relationships between the school and the community it serves.

Authorities in the field of school administration maintain that the relationship between the school and the community is one of the major tasks that all school administrators must accept in their respective roles as educational leaders. They refer to the importance of developing and maintaining sound public relations programs and practices as a major function in school administration.

Citizen participation in planning and decision-making in the overall school program is becoming much more diversified as parents and other community entities are demanding more opportunity for input into the business of the school. Furthermore, school administration experts devote considerable attention to the political influences that school administrators encounter in the daily operation of the enterprise. They point out that it is most important for school leaders to recognize the influence that local, state, and federal political and special interest groups have on the operation of the school. Middle school principals should recognize the potential benefit that can result from actively involving parents, nonparents, and other community agencies in the business of the school.

Experts in public relations stress the need for school administrators to be cognizant of the demographics of their communities, particularly within the boundaries of their individual attendance units. Furthermore, they provide insight into the processes and techniques for developing positive relationships with the various publics, groups, or agencies served by the school.

Because the middle school is intended to provide young adolescents with unique educational experiences during perhaps the most important transitional stages of growth, it is vital that middle school principals realize the significance of good school-community relations.

Role of the Middle School Principal

The middle school principal sets the tone for the school. This is where the character and personality of the school begin, the vitality of the institution is initiated, and the purpose of the school originates. Not only is the principal the instructional leader of the school, he or she is the person who, more often than not, is the spokesperson for the school in the community. The principal must be aware that the school is being judged by the public based on his or her behavior, no matter if the circumstances are professional, civic, social, or private.

In many instances, the principal is the first school official with whom the public will have personal contact. Judgments about the

quality of the school are often made by individuals at this time. Whether these conclusions are right or wrong, there is a very strong possibility, especially in urban and suburban communities, that the building principal will be the only school administrator that the vast majority of people ever meet face-to-face.

The middle school principal works directly with staff members in interpreting and implementing administrative regulations, board policies, and state and federal requirements. The principal must be aware that all of these things have a direct effect on staff morale, which in turn affects productivity. It is imperative that the faculty and staff be kept informed in a timely manner. People not only have a need to know, they have the right to know. When people are properly informed, they are more inclined to support the organization.

External publics also have a need to know what is going on in their schools. Much of what the community knows about the schools comes from what children tell their parents, friends, and neighbors (Lober, 1993). This kind of information is often biased by a child's knowledge of a particular situation. In addition, much of what the public gleans about the school comes from what it hears on the radio or television or reads in newspapers.

Research shows that effective school principals make vigorous efforts to keep the public informed about the school. Certainly this is not an easy task. People want to know if their school is teaching the basic skills, what their children are learning, how well they do on standardized tests, how their school compares to other schools, and how safe the school is. These are legitimate questions and must be addressed by school officials.

When attempting to keep the public informed, the principal must use a variety of communication devices. In addition to the traditional modes used—grade reports, school newsletters, memoranda, and so forth—it has become somewhat popular to develop citizen committees to assist in the distribution of information. The long-standing parent-teacher organization is one of the human information links that is available to assist the principal in this task. Another program that has been used with varying degrees of success is the citizen's advisory council, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Other means by which the princi-

pal is linked to various external groups include parent, grandparent, and/or volunteer aides, "Adopt-A-School" programs, and linkages with community civic and/or social organizations.

Any discussion about developing or improving school-community relations would be remiss if it fails to recognize the value of extracurricular activities and interscholastic athletics. These activities attract many people who otherwise have little or no direct contact with the school. It is quite feasible to use these opportunities to give some of the less visible school programs recognition. For example, samples of student classwork, arts and crafts projects, and individual or schoolwide awards can be prominently displayed, providing parents and others the opportunity to see firsthand some of the things that students do in the school. In reality, the possibilities for involving community people in school operations and procedures are limited only by the creative imagination of the middle school principal and teachers.

For many years, schools, especially high schools, have had some form of student government. This body often provides young people with the opportunity to practice the democratic process without granting them any real involvement in school operations. Recently, however, school officials have begun to realize that the more students are involved in the development of instructional programs, the more they become actively involved in learning. When students have the opportunity to be a part of the decision-making process on matters concerning their welfare, the more they feel that they are an important part of the enterprise. It has long been an accepted fact that the more individuals or groups are granted the privilege of providing input into the decision-making process, the more they accept decisions that are made, and the more they tend to work within the system. Student advisory boards, or student councils, have shown that they can provide the forum for valuable input regarding curricular, extracurricular, and behavioral matters. Middle school principals who provide those in their charge with the opportunity to express openly their ideas and concerns not only give them a valuable educational experience but also tap a rich source of information. As previously mentioned, when people are actively engaged in the operations of an enterprise, they are more satisfied in their endeavors and are far more productive.

Noncertificated Support Staff

The middle school principal must recognize that the noncertificated support staff—teacher aides, secretaries, custodial/maintenance personnel, cafeteria staff, and so on—play an important role in school-community relations. Most of these people live in the community and are actively involved in a variety of community civic organizations, religious groups, social groups, and so on. These people often are quite cognizant of the strengths and weaknesses of the instructional programs and the needs and vitality of the instructional staff, and they do discuss school matters with people in the community. They all have relatives, friends, and neighbors who may have no immediate connection with the school but who are taxpayers and have an interest in school affairs. Members of the community at large trust these individuals and are influenced by their views. The middle school principal must make every effort to provide staff members with accurate, up-to-date information. To do this, he or she must have an efficient and effective internal public relations program in place.

Citizen's Advisory Council

As mentioned previously, the middle school principal may want to organize a citizen's advisory council made up of representatives from the various publics served by the school. The purpose of this council is to keep the principal apprised of the overall tenor of the community and to offer suggestions concerning curricular and extracurricular programs and activities. This council has no administrative or supervisory authority. Its only function would be advisory, to provide the principal with information about the community and how the general public perceives the school. This information will help the principal gain a better understanding of what the public wants and feels that the school ought to be doing. Furthermore, the principal should become more aware of what the public sees the school doing well and what they see the school not doing well. In turn, individual members of the council would be able to provide the various publics they represent with accurate information about school matters. Because of the members' status in their respective social, racial, or ethnic groups, the general population would have

access to more correct and timely information and would be more likely to be supportive of the educational programs offered by the school.

Any attempt by the middle school principal to form a citizen's advisory council would definitely require the support of the superintendent and board of education. It would be most desirable, even mandatory, for the board to adopt policy under which advisory councils could and would function. The board of education should specify how such councils would be empowered and to what administrative authority they would be responsible. It should also prescribe the organizational structure of the council; the composition of the board in terms of selection, ethnicity, race, and length of tenure; how the officers are to be chosen; and the parameters of board power. Advisory boards could hold standing committee status or could be assembled on an ad hoc basis.

Because of the public's general sentiment toward public education at this time, it is suggested that local boards of education seriously consider adopting community or attendance unit advisory councils.

Teacher Advisory Councils

Good middle schools have principals who have a clear notion of what good education is. This concept should include teachers who are actively involved in the day-to-day operation of the school and the decision-making process that affects their professional lives.

For years, good school principals have valued the advice and counsel of their teachers. Now more than ever, they need that expert advice. Formal teacher advisory councils are recognized as providing the platform for teachers to express their opinions and ideas and to be involved in the decision-making process of the school. In any event, when principals and teachers work as a team, more often than not good things happen.

The period between childhood and adulthood—adolescence—is a critical time in every person's life. The middle school is designed to help children grow intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically during that crucial developmental period. When the two professional components, principal and teachers, work

together, much can be accomplished. Teachers working through their advisory councils can play a major role in the success of the school.

School Office Staff

The school secretary and/or student worker quite often are the first people with whom visitors to the school have contact. It is not uncommon for schools to use student workers to answer telephones, direct visitors, and deliver messages. In any case, the secretary or student worker should make a concerted effort to greet visitors, whether in person or over the telephone, in an amiable manner. Bear in mind that first impressions often have far-reaching effects and that you have only one opportunity to make a good first impression.

Secretarial and other office staff job descriptions should include proper and acceptable procedures for dealing with school patrons, employees, and students. Likewise, the secretarial staff should expect to be treated as the professionals they are. The middle school principal has the responsibility for setting acceptable standards of conduct and enforcing those standards.

Plant Physiognomy

Every day, school facilities, buildings, and grounds come under the scrutiny of the public. Daily, members of the community drive by and casually observe the condition and appearance of the school. People new to the community often drive by to see what the school looks like. Realtors often make it a point to show prospective community members the school to give them a feel for the community.

People develop an impression of the community by the way the school looks. Buildings and grounds that are in good repair and well maintained, and that are neat and free of litter, have a positive influence on people. On the other hand, facilities that are neglected or in need of repair make a negative statement about the school and community. Therefore, the middle school principal needs to be cognizant of the public relations value of the appearance of the school facilities.

It is the principal's responsibility to see that proper cleaning and maintenance programs and schedules are developed, implemented, and observed. Annual janitorial and maintenance workshops and training sessions ought to be designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of those programs.

School buildings represent a major community investment. They are more than a shelter for students and teachers; they are a total educational tool and deserve to be properly maintained. Custodial and maintenance personnel need to be made to feel that they are a part of the educational team and that what they do is important to the total educational program. They must also be aware that neat, attractive, well-kept buildings and grounds are important to the public image of the school. Proper care of school buildings and grounds is vital to the health and safety of all who use the facilities, not something that happens only when pupils and teachers are in attendance.

School facilities are often used after the school day and during vacation periods for leisure-time activities. More often than not, these activities are unscheduled and unsupervised. It is important that equipment be inspected regularly and kept in safe working condition.

Litter, graffiti, clutter, and other debris should not be allowed to accumulate because they have a tendency to act as a magnet, attracting more of the same. The custodian should have as a part of his or her daily assignment a specific time when the outside of buildings is inspected for possible trouble spots. Graffiti and other debris should be removed from the grounds, walks, driveways, and walls of buildings immediately. Wastepaper and other trash that is to be disposed of requires some type of enclosed, secure storage area so that it will not be scattered, possibly onto adjacent private property.

Certainly, the community relations value of clean, neat, attractive buildings and grounds cannot be overemphasized. Small things, such as keeping windows closed when buildings are not in use or keeping hedges and shrubs trimmed, reflect the pride that pupils and school personnel have in their school. In addition to presenting a positive public image, buildings and grounds that are clean

and neat have a positive effect on the behavior and physical and emotional health of students, faculty, and staff.

Communications

Throughout this chapter, the discussion has centered around developing positive relationships with those involved with the school—the internal and external publics. The major theme of any school-community relations programs must concern itself with developing and maintaining a sound, effective system of communications.

Ordinarily, communications are thought of as speaking and writing only. However, effective communications involve more. The old adage, "Actions speak louder than words," must be taken to heart. People may be more influenced by the way you behave and/or what you do than by what you have to say.

At the beginning of this chapter, we pointed out that a good public relations program must be designed to build morale, understanding, goodwill, and support for the organization. To meet these requisites, an effective two-way system of communications must be developed between the school and its internal and external publics.

Communications require the presence of three elements: a sender, a receiver, and the medium in which the message is to be transmitted. The sender must devise ways in which the message is to be forwarded to the receiver in a way that it can be interpreted and understood. Failure to make the message's meaning understandable precludes the very act of communicating. Middle school principals must realize that it is important to talk *to* rather than *at* people. You should try to never talk to people below or above their levels of understanding.

Several communication barriers exist that hamper effective communication, such as a person's status or position, professional jargon ("edubabble"), failure to listen, personal bias (the "Don't confuse me with facts, my mind's made up" syndrome), superior or inferior attitudes, a lack of interest in the subject, an aloof personal bearing, and so on. Middle school principals must be acutely aware of possible communication inhibitors and take measures to avoid them as much as possible.

It is very important that any written communication leaving the school be as error free as possible. Messages—letters, memos, reports, and so on—that are sent to parents, community members, the superintendent, and/or the board of education should be examined for correct spelling and grammar prior to distribution.

Summary

There is little doubt that a good school-community relations program provides a vital link between the school and the several publics it serves. Administrators who fail to develop effective lines of communication with parents, businesspeople, senior citizens, racial and ethnic groups, and a host of other community people find it difficult, if not impossible, to provide an efficient and effective school program for its youth.

Middle school principals are responsible for providing the leadership necessary to bring all facets of the education community together into one cohesive, constructive unit. To do this, they must enlist the aid of all people involved internally in the school—administrators, teachers, support staff personnel, and students. Each group plays a unique and important role in the public relations program. Furthermore, the middle school principal must establish effective communications with the several external publics in the school's service area. Parents and other community members need to know what the school is accomplishing, what changes are needed, and how they can help the school to achieve its goals. The principal must realize that each individual and group is vital to the success of the school and should devise ways to actively involve them in the entire process.

If the middle school is to achieve its assigned role in society—to help pass along to young adolescents the culture of our society and to provide them with the information, knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to become successful, contributing members of society—it is imperative that people work together for the common good of all.

Annotated Bibliography and References

Beane, J. A. (1993). *A middle school curriculum from rhetoric to reality* (2nd ed.). Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.

James Beane provides national leadership through his vision of middle-level curriculum. In this book, Beane offers guidelines for the "broad and underlying conception of the whole curriculum" (p. 1) at the middle level in addition to "(1) finding themes, (2) planning with young people, (3) democratic uses of knowledge, (4) getting started with curriculum reform, (5) scheduling around integrated activities, and (6) needed research regarding a new curriculum" (p. ix).

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. (1989). *Turning points: Preparing American youth for the 21st century.* New York: Carnegie Corporation.

This is a report of the Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents. Outlined are eight major recommendations for improving the educational experiences of young adolescents. This report is critical in addressing essential changes in education if we are to meet the needs of students in the next century.

Eccles, J. (1994). Does junior high itself create those monsters? *ISR Newsletter, 18*(2), 10.

This article describes mismatches between developmental needs of adolescents and the typical junior high environment.

Eichhorn, D. H. (1966). *The middle school.* New York: The Center for Applied Research in Education, Inc.

Reprinted in 1987 by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, this publication was "a landmark. Combining basic information about early adolescents with a sound philosophical rationale and specific programmatic plan, this book provided the first full articulation of the middle school proposal" (p. iii). Included in this volume are topics related to the middle-level student, educational program, and administration.

Forte, I., & Schurr, S. (1993). *The definitive middle school guide.* Nashville, TN: Incentive Publications.

This book outlines procedures for implementing such middle school concepts as interdisciplinary teams.

Garner, A., & Bradley, M. J. (1991). The principal as a leader in curriculum innovation. *The Clearing House, 64*(6), 419-420.

In this brief article, the authors provide general guidance as well as several specific approaches that principals can use for curriculum innovation. Especially helpful are the suggestions offered to principals during the implementation stage of curriculum development: change communication, staff development, and instructional planning.

George, P. S., & Alexander, W. M. (1993). *The exemplary middle school* (2nd ed.). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

This text is comprehensive in its range for addressing middle-level issues. The contents of this 550-page book include characteristics of the middle level as they relate to the student, the concept, the curriculum, instruction, teaming, grouping, organization, and leadership. This book was written for the beginner in middle-level education as well as "the practitioner seeking continued school improvement in already exemplary schools" (p. vii).

George, P. S., Stevenson, C., Thompson, J., & Beane, J. (1992). *The middle school and beyond.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

This text provides the reader with examples of successful, innovative programs and activities that promote teaching and

learning. Topics such as the teacher and student relationships, integrating the school, and shared decision-making should be especially valuable for administrators when designing sound internal and external school-community relations programs.

Gilstrap, R. L., Bierman, C., & McKnight, J. R. (1992). *Improving instruction in middle schools.* Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, Fastback No. 331.

The authors of this fastback offer 10 instructional strategies they believe to be appropriate developmentally for middle-level students. Based on experiences, observations, and a review of literature, the authors present a vignette for each strategy to demonstrate how student needs are met. The strategies discussed include cooperative learning, learning activity packages, simulations, microcomputers, and others.

Glatthorn, A. A., & Spencer, N. K. (1986). *Middle school/junior high principal's handbook.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

This book provides a practical, step-by-step guide to help administrators improve the educational program in middle schools.

Grimmett, P. P., Rostad, O. P., & Ford, B. (1992). The transformation of supervision. In C. D. Glickman (Ed.), *Supervision in transition* (pp. 185-202). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

This book gives descriptions and examples of ways that districts can reconcile state mandates for evaluation with programs that use peer coaching, teacher empowerment, and teacher reflection. These programs are especially suited for the middle school.

Jenkins, J. (1992). *Advisement programs.* Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.

This booklet addresses the goals, objectives, and needs for student advisement and outlines exemplary school advisement programs.

Lober, I. (1993). *Promoting your schools: A public relations handbook* (3rd ed.). Lancaster, PA: Technomic.

Lober has produced a most useful and practical handbook for administrators and others interested in developing or implementing a sound, workable public relations program. Lober discusses such topics as the sphere of responsibility of the board of education, superintendent, and so on; involving the various

publics in school matters; working with the media; establishing channels of communications; and more.

Merenbloom, E. Y. (1986). *The team process in the middle school: A handbook for teachers* (2nd ed.). Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.

This publication is a practical guide for teaming as it relates to middle schools. The author addresses the role and function of a team, activities to enhance a team's effectiveness, building a block schedule, instruction, and grouping leadership and staff development, among several other topics. This book is an essential text for teachers and principals in middle-level schools.

Merenbloom, E. Y. (1988). *Developing effective middle schools through faculty participation* (2nd ed.). Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.

In this publication, the author examines the conceptual development of the middle school and offers a model for implementing the characteristics of effective middle schools. The intended audience for this resource includes those persons planning transitions to middle-level schools as well as teachers and administrators interested in expanding existing programs.

National Association of Secondary School Principals' Council on Middle Education. (1985). *An agenda for excellence at the middle level.* Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.

This document examines 12 dimensions of schooling that the authors consider necessary for excellence at the middle level. Included among the 12 dimensions addressed are climate, curriculum, learning and instruction, school organization, teachers, and principals.

National Middle School Association. (1982). *This we believe.* Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.

This is a position paper of the National Middle School Association. Included in this publication is the rationale of a middle-level school and the definition of a middle-level school through discussion of the essential elements of a "true" middle school.

Patterson, J. L. (1993). *Leadership for tomorrow's schools.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

This book includes a discussion of differences in junior high and middle school arrangements with regard to scheduling. The

comparison of values of today's schools with values of tomorrow's schools is consistent with middle school philosophy.

Rost, J. C. (1993). *Leadership for the twenty-first century.* Westport, CT: Praeger.

This important text examines the concept of leadership as understood over the last 75 years and looks to the 21st century for a reconstructed understanding of leadership in the postindustrial age. Rost offers a new definition and paradigm for leadership, distinguishing it from management in fundamental ways.

Stevenson, C., & Carr, J. F. (Eds.). (1993). *Integrated studies in the middle grades: Dancing through walls.* New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Through this 211-page volume, the editors have assembled numerous essays directed toward the issue of what should be the curriculum in middle-level schools. The Vermont teacher-authors of these essays relate their experiences as they tried to change the curriculum and do new things, and tried new approaches in several different school settings. Their insights into students and experiences in altering the curriculum are invaluable.

Ubben, G. C. & Hughes, L. W. (1992). *The principal: Creative leadership for effective schools* (2nd. ed). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

This book is a comprehensive treatment of the tasks, roles, and functions of the principalship. The book is filled with illustrations, cases, and examples of how good principals manage effective schools.

Valentine, J. W., Clark, D. C., Irvin, J. L., Keefe, J. W., & Melton, G. (1993). *Leadership in middle level education: A national survey of middle level leaders and schools* (Vol. 1). Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.

This publication reports the results of a national survey conducted during the 1991-1992 school year about middle-level leaders and schools. This status report addresses the personal and professional characteristics of middle-level administrators, school leadership, educational programs, issues, and trends in middle schools and leadership profiles. The survey instruments sent to various leaders are also included in the report.

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